



# Deductive Teaching Methods: Using Kids' Responses to Build the Lessons

## Introduction

Having tried a number of teaching methods, we have found that the deductive approach is well-suited for teachers who are more content-oriented or who have a limited amount of time to teach a concept.

This method is usually a quicker way to teach concepts, because it requires less planning time than the inductive methods do. Additionally, it allows you to use students' responses to build the content of the lesson on the fly.

However, the trade-off for this efficiency is that not as many students will have opportunities to participate. As a result, the possibilities for incidental learning are minimized.

## Planning the Activity

First, we determine the concept to be taught. For the purpose of this brief demonstration of the deductive teaching method, we will select the concept, "antonyms are word pairs that have opposite meanings." With the point of the lesson firmly in mind, we think of examples that will support this concept. You are now ready to begin the lesson.

## Executing the Activity

We begin by establishing a connection with what we learned yesterday with what we will be learning today, as you see here:

**"Alright everybody, today we're going to talk about a different kind of**



**word pair. Who remembers what type of word pair we were talking about yesterday?**

**Q...?"**

**"We were talking about synonyms," he replied.**

**"That's correct, and who can tell us what synonyms are? J....?"**

**"Synonyms are word pairs that mean the same thing, like narrow and thin."**

**"Good. Today we are going to study a different kind of word pair called antonyms."**

We type, "Synonyms are word pairs that have the same meanings. Antonyms are word pairs that have opposite meanings."

We begin by defining the concept, followed by clarifying the terms, to check for students' prior knowledge, as in this example:

**"Antonyms are word pairs that have opposite meanings. What do we mean by word pairs?" We ask.**

**A..... thought for a moment and then said, "Well, pairs come in two's, like shoes."**

**"Very good, A....," we reply. "So word pairs are two words. Now, what does opposite mean?"**

**"It means they are different or sort of not the same, I think," M..... guessed.**

**"You're getting close to it, M.....," I reply.**

Now, we present examples. At first we classify these examples myself, explaining the



basis for our classification to the class. Then, we present additional examples to students and ask them to categorize these as either positive or negative examples. We also ask them to explain their thinking, as you see here:

**"Let me give you an example," we continue. "Huge and tiny have opposite meanings and they're two words, so they are antonyms. Another example of antonyms is fast and slow. They are antonyms because they're pairs of words whose meanings are opposite. Let me try another one. Are cheap and inexpensive antonyms? A.....?"**

**"No," A..... replies.**

**"Why not?" I ask.**

**"Because those words don't have opposite meanings."**

**"Great, now let's try another one. Are happiness and sadness antonyms? J.....?"**

**"Yes, because they're a word pair, and the words have opposite meanings."**

**"Excellent, and what about hot and cold? W.....?"**

**"Those are antonyms too, because they mean the opposite."**

**"Good job!" I exclaim enthusiastically.**

We have now reached the final phase of execution. We ask students to generate their own examples and to explain their thinking, and then we bring the activity to closure, as in this example:

**"You're all doing great! Now, we want to see if you can give me some of your own examples of antonyms. Anyone? K.....?"**



**"How about tall and short?"**

**"And why are those antonyms?" we ask.**

**"Because they are word pairs that have opposite meanings."**

**"Great! And now the bonus question. Remember we had the word pair cheap and inexpensive and you said that they were not antonyms? Can anyone make antonyms from these words? V.....?"**

**"How about cheap and expensive?"**

**"Good! Does anyone have another one?"**

**M..... replies, "Easy and difficult."**

**"Those were both excellent antonyms, we conclude. "I think you've all done a good job today in learning about this new kind of word pair."**

Whenever I complete an activity like this one, I'm usually pleased with the outcome. But, I also realize that many students did not participate--they are just simply in the habit of letting others respond instead of taking the initiative themselves.

We have to keep that in mind when I evaluate the activity.

## **Evaluating the Activity**

Because we covered synonyms on the previous day, today's work time for this class focuses on distinguishing synonyms and antonyms.

We have a couple of options here--We can present them with a series of multiple-choice questions that require them to make the distinction, or we can ask them to generate their own listings of synonyms and antonyms-- examples used in class, however, are off-limits.



Either way, we have a means for evaluating individual effort. Additionally, we may find that some students, particularly the ones who did not participate directly, need further explanation or additional practice--both of which I will provide as needed.

## **Conclusion**

We can use this deductive teaching method less than the inductive method, which is our preferred one. But, it accomplishes about the same thing with less effort on our part.

It also takes less time, making it more suitable for a mini-lesson.

The trade-off here is that unless we push the issue, participation is limited to those students who choose to respond.

Although the example presented here focused on a simple language arts concept, this approach is applicable in any subject area, at any grade level.

As with any other teaching method, the key is adequate planning and delivery.